

The plan more accurately reflects what most scientists studying human embryonic stem cells are actually doing, at least in this early stage of the research: not so much curing a disease as studying it.

Scientists, for instance, can introduce the gene for Lou Gehrig's or Parkinson's into a human embryonic stem cell and unravel some of the mysteries of how such diseases develop. They can use such cells to quickly test thousands of drugs.

"What's happening even now is that human embryonic stem cells and their derivatives are being used for models for developing therapies," said Dr. Arnold Kriegstein, who runs the stem cell research program at UC San Francisco. "It allows us for the first time in a petri dish to have a human disease, not an animal disease. It brings us so much closer to coming up with a therapy that really will work."

Who knows? advocates say. Treatments—even cures—sometimes crop up unexpectedly.

Jeff Sheehy, who represents HIV and AIDS patients on the institute's citizen oversight board, tells the story of his friend Jeff Getty, who died in October of complications from AIDS. In 1995, Getty volunteered for a controversial bone marrow transplant from a baboon.

The transplant didn't take, but Getty, who had been near death, experienced a then-amazing remission that lasted more than 10 years. It turned out that the drugs used to prepare him for the transplant anticipated the antiretroviral cocktail that, a year later, would turn AIDS from a death sentence to an often manageable, chronic disease.

Similarly, Sheehy asked, if scientists fail to successfully transplant embryonic stem cells but along the way discover drugs or other treatments that work, wouldn't the research be considered a success?

"My thing is just not to get obsessed with what was presented in the campaign," Sheehy said. "Science is a very complex business. It's full of failure. It's full of opportunity. And failure often equals opportunity."

HONORING MRS. AGNES FLAWS HUSAK ON THE CELEBRATION OF HER 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Agnes Flaws Husak on her 100th birthday. Mrs. Husak is an outstanding resident of the Third Congressional District of Illinois and has dedicated her life to public service.

Mrs. Husak was born January 12, 1917, on Union Street, in Chicago, IL. There, her family was at the technological forefront of the era—having the first house on the street with electricity, as well as a telephone. Mrs. Husak continued the family's innovative tradition while working for the GSA in 1940, utilizing revolutionary card punching equipment—the predecessor to the modern computer.

At the GSA, Mrs. Husak rose through the ranks and ultimately became head of her de-

partment. In retirement, Mrs. Husak has been an active member of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association and continues to play an integral role in this organization today.

When asked the secret of living a long life, Mrs. Husak once responded, "Where's your calendar? Show me your calendar." She believes it is important to stay active and certainly does this herself—attending the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, tending to her rose bushes, and playing Scrabble with her son. It is my honor to recognize Mrs. Agnes Flaws Husak on the celebration of her 100th birthday, an exceptional lady and an inspiration to all generations.

SPINA BIFIDA CAUCUS

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize January as Birth Defects Prevention and the week of January 8th through January 14th as Folic Acid Awareness Week. As the co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I have a long-standing commitment to reducing and preventing suffering from Spina Bifida, the nation's most common, permanently disabling birth defect, and helping to reduce future cases of Spina Bifida through increasing awareness of the need for women of child-bearing age to consume folic acid. More than 70,000 individuals in the United States are affected by Spina Bifida—a serious and life-long condition which occurs when the spinal cord fails to close properly during the early stages of pregnancy. Spina Bifida affects virtually all organ systems and results in myriad health, developmental, psychosocial, educational, and vocational challenges and complications.

Research indicates that consumption of the B vitamin, folic acid, before and during early pregnancy can lower the rate of Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects by up to 70 percent. The U.S. Public Health Service recommends 400 micrograms of folic acid daily for all women of childbearing age. Most over-the-counter daily multi-vitamins have this amount of folic acid. It is recommended that women take multivitamins and consume fortified grains as part of a healthy diet.

Despite this startling impact of folic acid on public health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that too many women of child-bearing age still do not consume adequate levels of folic acid. Of particular concern is that statistics show higher prevalence of Latinas in the United States delivering babies with Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects, serious birth defects of the brain and the spine, than non-Hispanic white women. CDC reports that Latinos in the United States consume the least amount of folic acid and have the least knowledge about folic acid among racial or ethnic groups in this

country. More must be done to increase consumption of folic acid among all women, particularly Latino populations, so we can continue to decrease the number of pregnancies affected by Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects.

The National Spina Bifida Program at the CDC provides information and initiatives to empower individuals, families, and health care providers with the resources they need to boost folic acid consumption and prevent secondary effects and complications of Spina Bifida. I commend the CDC for its important work and encourage the agency to expand its Spina Bifida quality of life initiatives and its folic acid awareness campaigns. While much has been accomplished by the National Spina Bifida Program thus far, there remains an unmet need due to limited resources. Increased funding would help ensure that the program has the resources necessary to support and expand folic acid education and awareness and quality-of-life efforts. I thank my colleagues for their support of the National Spina Bifida Program in past years and look forward to continuing to support this program so it can sustain and expand its scope of work.

Also, through my co-chairmanship, it has brought to my attention that not all corn products in the United States are enriched with folic acid. Public health officials believe that much of the Hispanic/Latino Spina Bifida health disparity is due to the fact that a significant proportion of the food consumed by Hispanic/Latino women of child-bearing age is imported corn-based products that are not enriched with folic acid. As such, I encourage all producers of corn products to enrich their foods with folic acid.

I encourage all women of child-bearing age to follow the CDC recommendations and take a daily multi-vitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid. The message of folic acid consumption must be disseminated not only this week and this month—but throughout the year—so that our goal of reducing and preventing suffering from Spina Bifida can be achieved.

I also would like to take this opportunity to commend the Spina Bifida Association for its work to support individuals and families affected by Spina Bifida and to increase awareness of the importance of folic acid consumption.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I encourage all of our colleagues to help spread the word about the importance of folic acid consumption, and I would be happy to provide any interested Members with information to share with their constituents. Also, I ask that my fellow colleagues join me and my co-chair, Congressman CHRIS SMITH, in the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus. I thank my colleagues for their attention to this important public health issue and again am pleased to recognize January as Birth Defects Prevention Month and this week, January 8th through January 14th, as Folic Acid Awareness Week.